



Good afternoon, it is a pleasure to be here.

My name is John Rahm. I am from Darke County where I milk 50 Jerseys. My wife Mary and I have operated our own farm for the past 30 years. Originally we milked Guernseys, but began the transition to Jerseys in the mid 1980's. We have effectively had a closed herd since 1989. We market our milk independently to Smith Dairy in Richmond, IN, where we have signed a non-rBGH contract effective December 1 of this year.

From the time I became aware of the development of rBGH in the late 1980's, I was skeptical of what effect this product would have on the health and longevity of the cow. The productive life of today's dairy cow now averages less than 2 lactations. Is rBGH responsible? To a great degree, yes. The dairy cow cannot tolerate the effects of repeated injections of this powerful growth hormone. How powerful? The tissue at the injection site is killed, according to Monsanto's own research. Cows are essentially "burned out" at a far too young age and discarded. This is not my idea of animal husbandry.

It is my experience that a cow's most productive years are from the 3rd lactation on. The cows in our herd average 7 lactations. We have several cows in their 10th lactation making them 12 –13 years of age. To quote my veterinarian: "You have the oldest cows of anybody I know"

The focus of today's discussion, however, is not whether this drug should have been approved 13 years ago, or on the health effects on the animal. The focus is on the "pass through" effects of rBGH on human health and specifically, the consumers right to know if the milk and other dairy products they are buying are from cows that have been treated with artificial growth hormone.

Consumers, in ever growing numbers, are rejecting dairy products from rBGH treated cows. When given the choice of "rBGH-free" labeled products and organics, consumers are paying a premium price for these labels because they believe it is the safest choice for their families. I believe the tremendous growth of organics over the last several years is directly related to the continued presence of rBGH in the marketplace. Consumers are becoming more educated all the time and the repeated claim of: "*It's ok because the FDA says so*" is distrusted with greater frequency in many areas other than just dairy.

To answer this growing market demand, Smith's, Kroger's, Dean Foods and many others are requiring an rBGH-free milk supply from producers and co-ops. I applaud this decision as a producer, and I fully believe it will lead to increased consumption of fluid milk.

I take offence at the attempt by some to designate rBGH-free milk as "specialty milk" or a "niche" product. The demand for rBGH-free milk is steamrolling through the Class 1 market and is growing in Class 3. Dean Foods CEO Greg Engles has recently stated at a meeting in Europe that he expects all milk in the US to be rBGH-free at some point in 2008. This can hardly be considered a niche by any measure. Much organic milk is custom bottled by existing processors. I challenge the rBGH defenders in our midst to bottle, label, and market "**rBGH-Enhanced**" milk and let the consumer decide.

I take greater offence at those farmers who claim they cannot compete economically without rBGH, and are considering continuing their usage of this product, even after pledging not to in a legally binding document, as there is no verification test YET. I ask co-ops, processors, and the ODA to make it perfectly clear to producers what the consequences of such deception will be.

I take greatest offence at faculty members of land grant universities who would recommend that farmers consider this deceptive action. Professors who continually shill for the benefit of one company to the detriment of honest farmers and consumers are an insult to us all.

In the 13 years this product has been on the market, we have been assured by some that "milk is milk". I disagree. Jersey milk is different than Holstein milk. Raw milk is different than pasteurized, homogenized milk. Low somatic cell count milk commands a premium in the marketplace, and rBGH has been shown to increase SCC.

Is rBGH milk different than milk from a non-user herd? Absolutely. Does the consumer have the right to make his or her own choice in this matter?

THAT is an un-equivocal YES.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I wish you all a Merry Christmas.

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rBST-Free Milk Agreement with Wayne Dairy Products Company
(Also known as Smith Dairy Richmond)

I, John M. Rethm, with farm(s) located at 9694 SR 185
VERSAILLES OH 45380 agree not to use rBST
on any of my cows. I understand that Wayne Dairy Products Company will
market my milk as rBST-Free and that the integrity of this product is crucial.

Any breech of this agreement will be dealt with to the full extent of the law.
If for any reason I intend to use rBST, I agree to notify Wayne Dairy's Field
Representative 30 days prior to using this product.

Incentive Over and Above Standard Plan

I agree that Wayne Dairy Products Company may pay an
incentive not to use rBST. I understand I must meet or exceed the
minimum Wayne Dairy Products Company quality standards to
receive the incentive. This incentive may be changed.

By signing this document, I acknowledge the authority to enter into this
agreement with Wayne Dairy Products Company.

11/10/17

Date

John M. Rethm

Name (please print)



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JAKE SCHMITZ
Organic Valley

My name is Jake Schmitz, and I am here on behalf of Organic Valley, a farmer owned cooperative with over 1200 farmers around the country, including 84 dairy farmers in Ohio alone. Collectively those Ohio farmers produced a fifty million pounds of milk in 2007, and were paid over \$12.7 million dollars.

We appreciate the committee's concerns regarding labeling and the consumers' perception of what is safe and what is not. With over \$400 million in sales this year, we believe that our consumers do understand what they are buying, and why they are buying it. To that end, we have asked them to go ahead and contact Governor Strickland to express their opinion about dairy labeling. For now, we'll let the consumers speak for themselves.

So I am here today to let you know what farmers think about this. Not "our" farmers vs. "those" farmers. That is what Monsanto would want you to think – that this issue is pitting farmers against other farmers – its not, and it should not. All of "our" farmers started out as farmers, and call themselves farmers. It's the folks sitting in offices in the big cities that want farmers against farmers. As any farmer will tell you – there is no "right" way to farm, just what works for you.

Farmers think that for too long, they have been exiled from the supermarket shelves. Milk used to come from your neighbor – now it comes from a middleman and the consumers don't know that somewhere there was a farmer involved, scratching a cow between the ears and making sure the hay is fresh.

Farmers want consumers to know who is producing their milk, and they want the consumers to know how they farm. Farmers are proud people, they are stewards of the lands and the animals. They want the consumers to know how well they are doing their job. If a farmer is proud that he gets his cows out on pasture every day, or that he treats them so they don't need antibiotics, or he doesn't inject his cows with synthetic hormones, then he should get to tell that consumer. This means the farmer gets to put it on the carton. That is his voice to the consumer.

Taking away the farmers' voice to the consumers means once again, banishing the farmer from the shelves. This means consumers lose touch with our farmers, they lose touch with their food. Losing touch means consumers don't respect the value that farmers add to our lives, not only by feeding us, but by creating a rural countryside and culture that is so deep in our nation's history. Our farmers own our carton, and they have chosen to use that as a direct line of communication to our consumers. Why should government step in the middle of the conversation? The farmers are not tricking the consumers, they are not deceiving the consumers, they are simply informing the consumers of the choices they have made in bringing the milk to the table.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and we look forward to this committee's recommendation to allow the continued conversation between farmers and consumers without undue government interference.